DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 423 482 CG 028 704

TITLE	Effective Parenting: Positive Support for Families. Position Statement.
INSTITUTION	National Association of School Psychologists, Bethesda, MD.
PUB DATE	1998-07-01
NOTE	4p.
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PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Behavior Problems; *Discipline; Elementary Education; *Intervention; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parenting Skills; *School Psychologists
IDENTIFIERS	*National Association of School Psychologists

ABSTRACT

Raising self-disciplined children is one challenge among many facing parents in American society today. Parents have little or no training in effective parenting, and they are often removed from extended families that have in the past been available to provide support and relief from the stress of child rearing. Discipline is often viewed as punishment that may lead parents to equate more discipline with harsher punishments. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) believes that the following parenting practices help prevent development of behavior problems in children: developing a trusting relationship, developing appropriate expectations, setting limits, and offering praise. The NASP urges school psychologists to promote the development of effective discipline practices through the following interventions: early intervention programs, school-wide programs to encourage effective discipline, consultation to parents, and parent education classes. The NASP encourages school psychologists and other professionals working with children and families to help parents develop effective discipline practices that are positive, safe, and instructive. School psychologists can help parents by supporting, developing, and implementing school and community programs that build healthy parent-child relationships and strengthen the home to enable children to become caring and responsible members of society. (Author/MKA)

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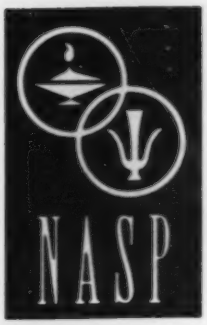

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Position Statement

Effective Parenting: Positive Support for Families

The issue of how to provide appropriate and adequate parenting and discipline is of great concern to the educational community. Parents want well-behaved children. They want children to grow up to be contented, productive, responsible and self disciplined. Some children's behaviors are particularly challenging. Noncompliance and aggressive behaviors can bring out the worst in parents. Neither extremes of severe physical punishment nor limitless freedom will lead to long-term behavior change. School psychologists can help parents and caregivers develop practical and effective ways of disciplining and parenting children.

Discipline is a word that makes most people uncomfortable. It is typically used as a synonym for punishment, often for physical punishment. Discipline comes from the Latin word *disciplina* meaning instruction or teaching. Discipline, so defined, places the parent as the leader or teacher and the child as the student. A parent teaches values, good judgment, self control and caring for others through daily interactions with children. A parent sets limits and makes appropriate responses when a child does something that is in conflict with parental wishes. Effective parenting is safe, nurturing and instructive. Physical punishment can be harmful physically, emotionally and socially. It is usually ineffective because it does not teach appropriate behaviors, but teaches that hitting is acceptable in dealing with others. The National Association of School Psychologists supports the use of discipline practices that treat children with respect while shaping their behavior to encourage self-control and caring for others.

Preventing Behavior Problems

The National Association of School Psychologists believes that the following parenting practices help prevent the development of behavior problems in children:

- **Developing a trusting relationship**

When children feel loved and respected by parents, they want to please them. Parents form trusting relationships with their children by exhibiting predictable and mature behavior and by protecting them from harm. Children who feel safe to make mistakes can learn to make better decisions in the future. A trusting relationship between parents and children is the cornerstone of effective discipline.

- **Developing appropriate expectations**

Children need to understand the expectations their parents have for them, and they need to feel they can meet those expectation. These expectations must be appropriate

for the child's age, temperament, and abilities. Children with learning or behavioral disabilities provide additional challenges to parents who must adjust their expectations to their child's unique needs and developmental patterns.

- **Setting limits**

Limits can help children feel that the world is orderly, predictable and safe. Parents should consider the child's age and development when setting limits. Limits should be enforced consistently, and there should be clear and appropriate consequences when those limits are challenged.

- **Offering praise**

Praising children's appropriate behavior will increase that behavior. Praise for specific behaviors is the basis for effective behavior management and should be used abundantly.

Effective Ways of Dealing with Misbehavior

The National Association of School Psychologists urges school psychologists to promote the development of effective discipline practices through the following interventions:

- **Early intervention programs**

Home visitation programs for parents of newborns are an effective means of teaching and supporting parents in the difficult job of raising children. These programs provide parents with knowledge about normal development, realistic expectations, and how to keep babies healthy and safe. School psychologists can take a leadership role in developing community support for these programs.

- **School-wide programs to encourage effective discipline**

Peer mediation, conflict resolution, and social skills training are all proven ways to help children develop responsible behavior. By incorporating regular communication with parents and opportunities for their participation, the effectiveness of these programs can be enhanced. School psychologists can bring leadership, research, and management skills to the development of these programs.

- **Consultation to parents**

School psychologists have unique opportunities to talk with parents about discipline. In consulting with parents on children's learning and behavior problems, school psychologists can provide a) behavioral expectations appropriate to the child's age and development, b) alternative methods of behavior management such as time out, logical consequences, behavioral contracting, positive reinforcement, and privilege systems, and c) information about school and community

resources such as parenting programs and professional help available beyond school services.

- **Parent education classes**

School psychologists are in an ideal position to provide parent training using a variety of research-supported parent education programs. They can help parents develop positive approaches to behavior management including limit setting, use of praise and reinforcement, giving effective commands, reducing negative parent-child interactions, and using negotiating and mediation. School psychologists can also provide guidance for parents on school-related concerns such as homework, report cards, and peer relationships.

Summary

Raising self-disciplined children is one challenge among many facing parents in American society today. Parents have little or not training in effective parenting and they are often removed from extended families which have in the past been available to provide support and relief from the stress of child rearing. Discipline is too often viewed as "punishment" which may lead parents to equate more discipline with harsher punishments.

The National Association of School Psychologists encourages school psychologists and other professionals working with children and families to help parents develop effective discipline practices that are positive, safe, and instructive. School psychologists can help parents by supporting, developing, and implementing school and community programs which build healthy parent-child relationships and strengthen the home to enable children to become caring and responsible members of society.

Adopted by NASP Delegate Assembly, April 18, 1998